



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**17375/13**

**LIMITE**

**AGRI 819  
AGRILEG 170**

**PUBLIC**

**NOTE**

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**From:** General Secretariat of the Council  
**To:** Council

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**Subject:** 8(d) - Organic Farming Review  
- presentation by the Commission

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Delegations will find attached a note from the Commission on the abovementioned subject to be dealt with under "Any Other Business" at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 16-17 December 2013.

## Organic farming review

Given the key objectives of the CAP post 2013, organic farming is an important element of the new CAP. It provides a substantial level of public goods and it has a key role in reinforcing the links between producers and consumers. Furthermore, organic farms are now important pools of dynamism, innovation, diversification and development of the EU's agricultural sector.

Organic farming aims at establishing a sustainable management system for agriculture respecting nature's systems and cycles, contributes to a high level of biological diversity, makes responsible use of energy and natural resources and respects high animal welfare standards. It aims at producing a wide variety of high quality products responding to consumers' demand, while enhancing profitability of producers.

Organic products are no longer a niche sector. They now represent a market of about 20 billion euro/year. They have an increasing importance in the EU's agriculture economy, growing at an average rate of 8 % a year since 2008 despite the economic crisis. The range of products offered to consumers has been substantially enlarged and organic products are now offered for sale not just in small specialised shops, but also in major supermarket chains and through the internet.

Such level of growth creates important challenges for the organic sector. In particular, production, control, supervision and trade rules need to be revised and adapted. The competitiveness of European organic farmers should also be further considered in relation to the EU and international markets. Legislation is complex and implies a high level of administrative burden.

In May 2012, the Commission presented a report to the Council on the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products. At the same time, the Commission launched an impact assessment exercise for the review of the political and legislative framework for organic farming. In May 2013, the Council welcomed and unanimously adopted conclusions (8906/13, LIMITE, AGRILEG 56) on the Commission's report. These conclusions strongly support an ambitious review aiming at long-term stability for the sector.

As part of the impact assessment exercise, the Commission conducted a very extensive consultation process with civil society. Three hearings took place involving 72 stakeholders covering the whole organic sector: experts, researchers, consumers, producers, retailers, processors and traders. These were followed by two meetings of the enlarged advisory group, specifically dedicated to the review process.

In addition, in order to gather information from the general public, the Commission launched a public consultation with an on-line questionnaire from January to April 2013. The Commission received 45 000 replies to this questionnaire, most of them from EU citizens. This number of replies, unprecedented in previous consultations in the European agricultural sector, demonstrates the enormous attention EU citizens and consumers attach to organic farming.

The Commission is at this stage finalizing the impact assessment report and the adoption of the relevant political and legislative proposals is foreseen for March 2014. At the Council meeting this December, the Commission will make a presentation of the results of the public consultation.

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